

Bartlett position on Iraq

I have urged withdrawal after achievement of key benchmarks rather than arbitrary withdrawal if we want to protect Americans and prevent a human rights catastrophe in Iraq. The following is an explanation of votes which I have cast.

On Oct. 10, 2002, I voted for the Spratt substitute because it required a United Nations National Security Council resolution authorizing the use of military force against Saddam Hussein, or failing that, another vote by the Congress to authorize unilateral military force by the U.S. It failed. H.J. Res. 114 did not require it, but I urged the president to come back to Congress for an additional vote before he engaged our military in a unilateral, pre-emptive attack against Saddam Hussein.

On Nov. 8, 2002, the U.N. Security Council passed unanimously Resolution 1441 offering Iraq “a final opportunity to comply with its disarmament obligations” under 10 previous resolutions. On March 17, 2003, President Bush, supported only by the United Kingdom and Spain, said no further authorization from the U.N. would be sought before an invasion of Iraq.

On Nov. 18, 2005, I voted against H. Res. 571, which stated: “It is the sense of the House of Representatives that the deployment of United States forces in Iraq be terminated immediately.” A withdrawal plan based upon arbitrary dates will do more harm than good because it would only tell the enemy when and where our troop strengths will go down and thus where to attack.

On Dec. 14, 2005, after the Iraqis elected a permanent national government, I urged the creation of a check list to give Americans and Iraqis a way to measure progress made and future milestones yet to be achieved.

On June 16, 2006, I voted for H. Res. 861 that declared an arbitrary date for withdrawal of U.S. troops from Iraq is not in the national security interest of the United States, arguing that a conditions-based withdrawal defining mission success is what the American people and Iraqi people want, need, and deserve.

On March 23, 2007, I voted against the Iraq Supplemental Appropriations bill because it conditioned funds for our troops deployed in harm’s way on a date certain for withdrawal of American troops from Iraq.

On July 12, I voted against H.R. 2956, a bill that would force a withdrawal of U.S. forces from Iraq. Giving enemies mandatory withdrawal dates puts 260,000 Americans deployed and working in Iraq in greater danger.

If the Spratt substitute had been approved, there would be a U.N.-led international coalition committed to Iraq. It wouldn’t be America’s war. So what do we do now?

Americans and Iraqis need a commitment that Americans will come home after achieving success on a list of key benchmarks posted on every Americans' refrigerator. We need to see when progress is being made and when our troops are coming home.

My highest priority is making sure that our men and women in harm's way have everything they need to complete their difficult missions and return home safely as soon as possible. Most thoughtful observers believe that arbitrary withdrawal of American troops from Iraq is not a strategy or solution that offers hope for a safe return home for our troops, a better future in Iraq, or greater security for Americans.